

T H E
E P I S T L E
F R O M T H E
Y E A R L Y M E E T I N G,
H E L D I N
L O N D O N,

By ADJOURNMENTS, from the 22d to the 31st of the
Fifth Month, 1797.

To the *QUARTERLY* and *MONTHLY MEETINGS* of *FRIENDS* in
GREAT BRITAIN, IRELAND, and elsewhere.

DEAR FRIENDS,

WE are sensible that there are among you, who travail with us in spirit for the advancement of the cause of Truth; and we believe that this concern is increasing in divers places. Nevertheless, as, at these seasons of general inspection, our minds continue to be impressed with a sense, that cautions are still needful in several particulars, we think it right still to endeavour to excite you to further degrees of dedication to the service, in which, according to their measures, all ought to be engaged. If one be our Master, even Christ, remember that in his family there is no place for the slothful. Accept, therefore, with this our salutation of brotherly love, our exhortation to be willing individually to inquire, "What lack I yet?"

We have this year received Epistles from all the Yearly Meetings of Friends in America; and also some verbal accounts given by brethren who have been travelling, in the service of the gospel, on the Continent of Europe; in some parts of which, the same divine Hand which led our predecessors out of forms, to the substance of Christianity, appears to be collecting a people, to bear witness to the saving efficacy of the light of Christ revealed in the heart.

The amount of sufferings, reported to have been sustained by our Friends of this island, is Eight Thousand and Twenty-two Pounds: that in Ireland, One Thousand, Three Hundred, and Forty-seven Pounds. These are principally for Tithes, Priests' demands, and those called Church-rates; and increased again this year by distrains
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on account of the rate for raising men for the army and navy, and the militia. On this last account also, one friend hath been not long since committed for three months to the county gaol at York; and another, last summer, was detained a like term in that at Worcester. Of the prisoners at York, on account of our testimony against an hireling ministry, one has been released by death: the rest still remain prisoners.

On considering the state of our Society, several defects occur: for in a people professing as we do, indeed in all who assume the Christian name, it is a defect not to avoid every thing which tends to evil, and to bring reproach on their profession. Of this kind is the want of punctuality in the fulfilling of engagements, of which we understand there are some instances: but if all were sufficiently sensible of the injustice of the practice, of the disgrace with which it is attended, and what an occasion of stumbling it may be to those who are enquiring after the way of Truth, it would surely preserve them from inadvertently forming engagements, which they were not clear that they were able to fulfil. The same care of preserving our profession from reproach, might also, if kept in the remembrance, prevent another evil of which we have at this time some account; namely, the unnecessary frequenting of publick-houses. We desire that all under our name may be cautious of remaining in them, after the purpose of business, or of refreshment, is accomplished: but to make them a resort for any other purpose, may it never need to be named among a people who profess the practice of Christian sobriety!

We are not disposed to enter into all the particulars of deviation, in which those, who will not submit to be bound by the testimony of Truth in their hearts, may be found; but we think we can trace several of them to that common, but destructive cause, the love of worldly things. In some it discovers itself in a desire to be rich and great; whilst in others the worldly spirit is as clearly discerned, though the attention seems to be occupied in smaller concerns: and though we are clear that very extensive ones are often in themselves great evils, yet the trafficker in hundreds, unless the eye be kept single, may be as much buried in the earth as the trafficker in thousands. But were each honestly to ask himself the question, 'Have I first sought the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness?' how might the answer tend to cover the face with confusion! Did our Lord utter any one precept with a clearer address to the reason, and greater promise of support, than that of which such a question is the substance? So that to seek first the world, is to give up at once our obedience to his command with our trust in his promise.—

Matth. vi. 33, 32. "All these things shall be added unto you." "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

We are not about to condemn industry, which we believe to be not only praise-worthy, but indispensable. It is the desire of great things, and the engrossment of the time and attention, from which we desire that all our dear friends may be redeemed. We doubtless

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owe duties to ourselves, and to our families; but we owe them also to society; and do we not owe even our ownelves to our all-wise, all-protecting, and provident Creator? Should we therefore suffer the things of this world to prevent our attending at the times appointed for his worship; whether on the day generally set apart for that purpose, or on other stated days of the week; and ought we to be content, when assembled, to permit our thoughts to wander into the concerns of the present life?

The situation of the offspring, and of the servants, of those who neglect the due attendance of our religious Meetings, is greatly to be lamented; as is that even of some who, though frequently seen at them, do not, by their conduct, seem to believe that it is required of them to allow their dependents also to attend; but are leaving these still to pursue the world for them at home. For if any have, in a greater or a less degree, made gold their hope, or have "said to Job. xxxi. 24, "the fine gold, thou art my confidence," it will be found that, in proportion, they will be slack in bringing their families to our accustomed opportunities for publick worship.

We feel not inclined, though war yet continues to desolate the earth, to repeat our advices on that head, or to resume the subject further than to remark how thankful we ought to be, in that we are still permitted to meet together, as *we* have done at this time, in brotherly fellowship and mutual condescension; whilst the world around us is tossed with the tempest of discord. O Friends, may we consider it as an incitement to suffer every thing, which tends to contention, to be eradicated from our hearts; and, under the influence of the heavenly Husbandman, to cultivate, with unwearied assiduity and patience, all those dispositions which make for peace; things whereby we may edify one another; yea, things by which we may evince to our fellow-men at large, that we are really redeemed from the spirit of contests, and truly the disciples of a merciful Redeemer: whose holy, pure, and undefiled religion, is a system of universal love.

Signed, in and on behalf of the Meeting, by

JOSEPH GIBBINS,

Clerk to the Meeting this Year.

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